



FACT SHEET

Module 14

Adverse Conditions Dust Storms

WHAT IS A DUST STORM?

A dust storm is created whenever strong turbulent winds pick up loose dirt and sand particles in such quantity as to reduce visibility seriously.

WHEN AND WHERE DUST STORMS OCCUR

Dust storms can be expected during the afternoons of hot summer days when "thunderhead" clouds are seen. They generally result from wind and thunderstorm activity, and become hazardous to traffic. They have the appearance of solid walls of dust and can be seen approaching from some distance.



A dust storm usually arrives suddenly in the form of an advancing wall of dust and debris which may be miles long and several thousand feet high. They strike with little warning, making driving conditions hazardous. Blinding, choking dust can quickly reduce visibility, causing accidents that may involve chain collisions, creating massive pileups. Dust storms usually last only a few minutes, but the actions a driver takes during the storm may be the most important of his or her life.

LIGHTS OUT!

In the past, motorists driving in dust storms have pulled off the roadway, leaving lights on. Vehicles approaching from the rear and using the advance car's lights as a guide have inadvertently left the roadway and in some instances collided with the parked vehicle. Make sure all of your lights are off when you park off the roadway.

DUST STORM SAFETY TIPS

- If dense dust is observed blowing across or approaching a roadway, pull your vehicle off the pavement as far as possible, stop, turn off lights, set the emergency brake, take your foot off of the brake pedal to be sure the taillights are not illuminated.
- Don't enter the dust storm area if you can avoid it.
- If you can't pull off the roadway, proceed at a speed suitable for visibility, turn on lights. Use the painted fog line to help guide you. Look for a safe place to pull off the roadway.
- Never stop on the traveled portion of the roadway.
- If you are on a freeway, leave the freeway at an exit ramp, if possible.
- Heavy rain may follow the dust storm. Watch for flooded highway dips even though it may not have rained where you have been.



TUMBLEWEEDS

High winds cause dry "tumbleweeds" to break away from their roots and roll across the countryside. They are light masses of small, brittle stems and are not hazardous to automobiles. **DO NOT** take evasive action to avoid tumbleweeds. By so doing, you endanger yourself and other traffic.